



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Black Hills National Forest
Supervisor's Office

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Greetings from the Black Hills National Forest, Thunder Basin National Grassland, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) High Plains District:

The Forest Service and BLM have recently completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Teckla-Osage-Rapid City 230 kV Transmission Line Project (the Project). This project, proposed by Black Hills Power (BHP), would construct and operate a 230 kV transmission line connecting the Teckla Substation in Campbell County, Wyoming to the Osage Substation in Weston County, Wyoming and the Lange Substation located in Pennington County near Rapid City, South Dakota. The project is proposed to strengthen the transmission network, improve transmission system reliability, and to help meet future demand for electricity and economic development in the region.

You are receiving this letter to notify you that the FEIS and draft Forest Service decisions are available for public review; and, to provide information on the Forest Service objection process for those eligible to participate.

The Project In Wyoming the proposed line would cross private, state, and public lands including lands managed by the Thunder Basin National Grassland (TBNG) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In South Dakota the line would cross private and public lands including lands managed by the Black Hills National Forest (BHNF). The manager of each of the three Federal units (TBNG, BLM, BHNF) will issue a separate decision for their respective unit. Their decisions will be restricted to land within their respective jurisdictions. Neither the US Forest Service nor the Bureau of Land Management has authority to make decisions for this project on non-Federal land. Any decision on whether the proposed transmission line might cross non-Federal property would be negotiated strictly between those land owners and BHP.

This project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process which requires federal agencies to evaluate and disclose the environmental effects of a proposed project prior to deciding whether to approve it. Chapters 1 and 2 of the FEIS describe and compare the alternatives. Three alternatives are considered in detail in the FEIS: the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1); the Proposed Action (Alternative 2); and the Proposed Action with Route Modifications (Alternative 3). Chapter 3 of the FEIS discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects which would result from the proposed action and alternatives. Additional chapters and an appendix provide further information including maps of the alternative routes.

Draft Decisions The Responsible Officials for this project are Craig Bobzien, Forest Supervisor, Black Hills National Forest; Dennis Jaeger, Forest Supervisor, Thunder Basin National Grassland; and Stephanie Connolly, District Manager, BLM High Plains District.



The Responsible Officials have identified Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative which they intend to select for implementation. This preferred alternative includes route modification 3a, Fiddler, as part of the TBNG decision; and modifications 3c, Clinton; 3d, Edelweiss; 3f, Pactola South; 3i, Deerfield 2; and parts of 3g, Hidden Valley, and 3j, Ponderosa Ridge, as part of the BHNF decision.

Timing of final decisions The Forest Service decisions are currently in draft form, to allow for public review as part of the agency's predecisional objection process. The final decisions on this project will be issued after that process has concluded, expected in about 90 days. The objection process is described in regulations at 36 CFR 218, Subpart B. Any final decision on this project will not be appealable under 36 CFR 215 or any other authority. The BLM does not have an administrative review process applicable to this project, and thus has not issued a draft ROD. BLM will issue their final decision concurrent with the final Forest Service decisions.

How to file an objection The period for filing objections to the FEIS and the draft RODs issued by the BHNF and TBNG will end 45 days following the publication date of the legal notices in the Rapid City Journal, published in Rapid City, South Dakota; and the Laramie Boomerang, published in Laramie, Wyoming, respectively. These notices are expected to publish on Saturday, December 6, 2014, and will be the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Those wishing to file an objection should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Written objections may be submitted to: USDA Forest Service, Region 2, Objection Reviewing Officer, ATTN: Ken Tu, 740 Simms St., Golden, CO 80401. Objections may be hand-delivered between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Federal business days. Objections may be faxed to 303-275-5134, or may be submitted in electronic form to: r02admin_review@fs.fed.us (the second and third characters are zero-two). The subject line should contain the name of the project. An automated response will normally confirm electronic receipt of an objection. If a person filing an objection does not receive such a response it is their responsibility to ensure their objection is received in a timely manner. Electronic objections must be readable in MS Word, Rich Text Format (rtf), or pdf format.

Written objections will be accepted only from those who previously submitted specific written comments on the proposal during scoping or other designated public comment opportunities. Issues raised in any objection must be based on those previously submitted comments, unless based on new information arising after designated comment opportunities.

Any objection must meet the following minimum content requirements (36 CFR 218.8):

- 1) name and address of objector (36 CFR 218.2), with telephone number if available;
- 2) signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic email may be filed with the objection);

- 3) when multiple names are listed on an objection, identification of the lead objector (36 CFR 218.2);
- 4) the name of the proposed project, name and title of the responsible official, and the name(s) of the national forest(s) and/or ranger district(s) on which the proposed project will be implemented;
- 5) a description of aspects of the proposal addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposal; how the objector believes the analysis and draft decision violate law, regulation or policy, if applicable; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider; and,
- 6) a statement demonstrating the connection between prior specific written comments on the proposal and the content of the objection (unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunities for comment).

Any objection including attachments must be filed within 45 days of the publication of the relevant legal notices. It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing with the reviewing officer. Timeliness will be determined by the following factors (36 CFR 218.9):

- 1) the date of the US Postal Service postmark for an objection received before the close of the fifth business day after the objection filing period;
- 2) the agency's electronically generated posted date and time for email and facsimiles;
- 3) the shipping date for delivery by private carrier for an objection received before the close of the fifth business day after the objection filing period; or,
- 4) the official agency date stamp showing receipt of hand delivery.

For further information The Teckla-Osage-Rapid City Transmission Project FEIS, and the draft ROD for that portion proposed on the BHNF, is available on the Black Hills National Forest website at <http://go.usa.gov/Bh1>. The draft ROD for the TBNG can be found on the TBNG website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/mbr/landmanagement/projects>. For more information on this project, the objection process, or to request a copy of the Teckla-Osage-Rapid City FEIS and/or draft RODs, please contact Ed Fischer at (605) 673-9207.

Sincerely,



CRAIG BOBZIEN
Forest Supervisor